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# ARE NAVAL EXPENDITURES WASTED ?

BY GEORGE V. L. MEYER

Former Secretary of the Navy

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THE public demand for the facts with respect to the preparedness of the navy to-day grows out of a popular desire to be sure that we are getting our money's worth for money expended. The people cannot pass intelligently upon the question of the size of the navy until they know its condition, its organization as it now exists, whether it is being administered efficiently and economically, and what methods have been employed as to the making and using of the appropriations.

Our naval appropriation for 1914 was \$140,000,000; that of Germany, \$120,000,000. The total appropriation for our Navy from 1900 to 1914, inclusive, amounted to \$1,656,000,000, while the appropriation during the same period for Germany's navy was \$1,137,000,000, showing that the American navy during fifteen years has cost 45 per cent. more than the Kaiser's navy. Yet to-day Germany's navy is more powerful than ours. The difference during those years represents the cost of two battle-ships annually for fifteen years.

Until within a few years no naval appropriation could pass the Senate which did not meet the sanction of both a Northern and Southern Senator, each of whom was a member of the Committee on Naval Affairs. It is interesting, in consequence, to analyze some of the appropriations between 1895 and 1910.

In 1899 a site was purchased in Frenchman's Bay, Maine, at a cost of \$24,650—far above the assessed valuation—and later an additional amount of \$600,000 was expended to obtain there an absolutely unnecessary coaling-station, which has since been dismantled, as it was practically unused.

At the Portsmouth Navy-Yard, so called, in Kittery, Maine, a dock was built at an expense of \$1,122,800, and later it was found necessary to blast away rock in the channel in order to reach the dock, at an additional expense of \$745,300.

Between 1895 and 1910 improvements, machinery, repairs, and maintenance in the yard amounted to \$10,857,693, although there was a large navy-yard within seventy miles.

On the other hand, at Port Royal, South Carolina, a dock was built at the insistence of the Southern Senator, at a cost of \$450,000, which proved useless, and, although the original cost of the site was but \$5,000, it was not abandoned as a naval base until \$2,275,000 had been expended.

Not the least daunted by this extravagant waste, the same Senator determined to have a share of the naval melon for his State, so, with the assistance of the Northern Senator, he obtained the establishment of another naval station at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1901. There was no strategic value thus accomplished, nor was it necessary, with the Norfolk Navy-Yard located at Hampton Roads. The \$5,000,000 which has been squandered at Charleston includes a dry-dock built for battle-ships, costing \$1,250,000, but which experience shows can only be used by torpedo-destroyers and gunboats. The \$5,000,000 could have been employed to great advantage at the Norfolk Navy-Yard, where the battle-ship fleet generally assembles. A portion even could have been used wisely at Key West, Florida, a supplementary base of real strategic value for torpedoes and submarines—a protection to the Gulf of Mexico and the mouth of the Mississippi River, and on account of its geographical situation, Key West would serve as a base of supplies to the fleet in the Caribbean Sea.

The purpose of the navy-yards is to keep the fleet in efficient condition. Their location should be determined by strategic conditions, their number by the actual needs of the fleet. The maintenance of navy-yards which do not contribute to battle efficiency is a great source of waste.

The United States has over twice as many first-class navy-yards as Great Britain, with a navy more than double the size of ours, and more than three times as many as Germany, whose navy is larger than that of the United States.

The total cost of navy-yards up to June 30th, 1910, with land, public works, improvements, machinery, and maintenance, including repairs, amounts to \$320,600,000. (As seen by the footnote on the following page.)

Overburdened with a superfluous number of navy-yards distributed along the Atlantic coast from Maine to Louisiana, in 1910 I recommended that Congress give up and dispose of naval stations at New Orleans, Pensacola, San Juan, Port Royal, New London, Sackett's Harbor (New York), Culebra,

*Statement showing date of establishment; original cost of site; expenditures for buildings, public works, and improvements; machinery installed in the various buildings; and cost of maintenance of the several navy-yards and stations to June 30, 1910; also the average yearly cost of maintenance for five years.*

Stations	Date of establishment	Original cost of site	Total expenditures for buildings, public works, improvements, and machinery installed in the various buildings	Total maintenance, including repairs	Total cost of land, public works, improvements, machinery, and maintenance, including repairs	Average yearly cost of maintenance for five years
<b>First-class navy-yards (at home):</b>						
Portsmouth...	1800	\$110,500.00	\$10,006,929.89	\$8,720,582.09	\$18,838,011.98	\$428,595.15
Boston.....	1800	360,782.26	14,015,799.50	16,007,646.23	30,384,227.99	916,535.41
New York....	1801	590,123.15	25,867,974.92	31,177,278.60	57,635,376.67	1,958,452.92
Philadelphia..	1868	Gift	11,015,439.94	10,269,160.47	21,284,600.41	708,093.69
Washington...	1800	157,099.00	11,969,124.71	13,197,175.25	25,323,398.96	728,695.26
Norfolk.....	1800	478,517.50	15,733,082.19	16,113,733.15	32,325,932.84	1,000,598.64
Mare Island..	1854	83,491.00	17,644,057.09	17,303,162.17	35,090,710.26	1,051,424.93
Puget Sound..	1891	18,212.50	5,610,377.53	3,769,602.96	9,398,192.99	469,012.97
<b>Second-class navy-yards (at home):</b>						
Charleston...	1901	105,207.00	3,857,180.01	778,381.52	4,740,768.53	142,952.88
Pensacola....	1828	(1)	7,700,637.10	4,516,794.01	12,217,431.11	349,011.95
New Orleans..	1849	15,000.00	2,684,151.18	701,984.69	3,401,135.87	112,098.79
<b>First-class navy-yard (abroad):</b>						
Hawaii.....	1899	58,140.50	1,577,814.35	590,700.73	2,226,655.58	89,318.43
<b>Second-class navy-yards (abroad):</b>						
Cavite.....	1898	(2)	2,523,136.35	8,723,088.71	11,246,225.06	1,056,401.84
Olongapo....	1901	(2)	2,908,849.48	909,515.30	3,818,364.78	177,265.33
<b>Naval stations (at home):</b>						
Port Royal...	1883	5,000.00	1,173,647.78	1,100,002.00	2,278,649.78	24,351.76
Key West....	1854	156,111.83	2,205,440.23	1,787,934.35	4,149,486.41	143,096.25
<b>Naval stations (abroad):</b>						
Guantanamo..	1903	Leased	1,189,237.01	969,211.60	2,158,448.61	178,131.23
San Juan....	1898	(2)	73,754.06	770,265.31	844,019.37	95,746.86
Guam.....	1898	(2)	206,624.14	1,253,188.58	1,549,812.72	180,510.90
Tutuila.....	1900	45,125.39	489,353.09	447,005.83	981,484.31	64,258.52
<b>Training-stations:</b>						
Newport.....	1869	69,850.00	2,378,171.72	4,778,286.21	7,226,307.93	506,917.90
California....	1898	(1)	344,969.36	720,656.07	1,065,625.43	96,084.07
Great Lakes..	1905	Gift	2,591,546.58	313,306.90	2,904,853.48	62,661.38
<b>Coaling-stations:</b>						
Frenchm's B'y	1899	24,650.00	541,167.44	57,884.54	623,701.98	8,655.55
Bradford.....	1900	35,000.00	1,148,944.80	220,536.88	1,404,481.68	38,589.37
Pichilique, Mexico.....	1900	.....	51,804.44	20,032.78	71,837.22	2,019.94
San Diego, Cal.	1904	(1)	204,758.87	26,822.98	231,581.85	4,742.17
Tiburon.....	1904	80,000.00	550,409.53	98,124.75	734,534.28	19,490.97
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>						
Annapolis (Naval Acad.)	1845	405,345.76	10,825,529.94	10,244,815.07	21,475,690.77	1,252,519.53
Naval proving-ground..	1890	38,220.00	944,620.24	1,206,324.75	2,189,164.99	120,790.63
Las Animas (naval hosp.)	1907	(1)	374,573.42	827,247.52	1,201,820.94	165,449.50
Culebra (nav. base).....	1904	(2)	23,132.08	157,788.91	180,920.99	30,187.35
Sitka.....	1900	(1)	124,961.90	22,909.92	147,871.88	3,324.78
Yokohama....	1900	.....	88,677.99	406,232.00	494,909.99	55,811.94
New London..	1868	Gift	431,937.40	337,561.68	769,599.14	13,156.05
Sackett's Harbor, N. Y....	1846	4,425.00	36,387.05	14,820.95	55,633.00	4,647.98
<b>Total.....</b>		2,840,800.89	159,209,903.39	158,619,765.46	320,669,429.74	12,252,602.82

1 Military reservation.

2 Acquired by conquest.

3 First record of any appropriation being made for improvements or maintenance.

4 Expenditure fiscal year 1910, \$2,107.91.

and Cavit , none of which was a first-class station. The average yearly cost of maintaining these stations between 1905 and 1910 was \$1,672,675, and very little useful work had been performed at any of them. Later, I practically closed them, but could not abolish or dispose of them, no action having been taken by Congress. Pensacola and New Orleans have since been reopened by my successor.

The interests of the country and the interests of the navy would be best served by one first-class naval base with sufficient anchorage for the entire fleet, north of the Delaware, equipped for docking, repairing, etc., and another station of equal capacity at Norfolk, in Chesapeake Bay, with Guantanamo, Cuba, to serve as the winter-station rendezvous.

On the Pacific coast we are fortunate in having only two naval stations, one at Bremerton, on Puget Sound, established in 1891, with ample depth of water, costing to date about \$9,000,000; and the other at Mare Island, established in 1850, some thirty miles from the harbor of San Francisco, with inadequate depth and width of water along its water-front. The total costs, with maintenance and repairs, have amounted to \$35,000,000, and, on account of insufficient depth of water, none of the battle-ships built in the last eight years could have been berthed there.

Arrangements were entered into some time ago, and have lately been consummated, by which the navy will have the use of a thousand-foot dock to be built at Hunter's Point by a private corporation, the Government making an annual payment of \$50,000. With the completion of this great dock the fleet will not have to depend entirely on Puget Sound. Later, there will be additional facilities in Hawaii, when the Pearl Harbor Dock is finished.

The situation of the naval base near San Francisco is as follows:

We have the Mare Island Navy-Yard at Vallejo, with use of a future battle-ship dock at Hunter's Point, near San Francisco, a coaling-station on an island in the bay, and a training-station on still another. It has been well understood for years that the California Senator on the Naval Committee would not consent to the abandonment of the Mare Island, suited to its requirements when first selected in 1850, but absolutely unsuited to navy requirements after battle-ships became a feature.

The New Orleans yard, located one hundred miles up the river and with a floating-dock of no service to dreadnoughts, its

capacity being limited to 16,000 tons, as a maximum, was furnished up for a while with modern shop-buildings and incompleting streets in order to appease a Louisiana Congressman, a member of the Naval Committee, since deceased. The amount expended on that needless and useless station was over \$2,000,000.

The Pensacola Navy-Yard, originally a military reservation, had cost the United States Government, up to 1910, \$12,200,000, with little return in the way of output.

The fundamental cause of excessive expenditures is due to the fact that appropriations are not made with the sole view of the battle efficiency of the fleet (which is the navy) and its military requirements. Politics and log-rolling, as I have shown, have entered into the making of appropriations by Congress.

A more recent case is the training-station outside of Chicago, established in 1905. The original site was a gift, but \$3,646,000 has been expended, buildings erected on a lavish scale, quite unnecessary and not suitable, due to the zeal of a Congressman of the district, a member of the Naval Committee. One-half the amount would have more than met the requirements and have been better adapted to what a training-station should be.

For an example as to the present lack of efficiency, in a hearing at Washington, December 9, 1914, Admiral Fletcher is asked:

MR. ROBERTS (member of the Naval Committee): "Here is a statement reciting reasons why the submarines are in such bad condition. 'The fault has been that no one in the department has been charged with the direct responsibility of keeping submarines in constant repair.' Do you know anything about that? Is it a fact that there is no one in the department especially charged with looking after submarines and keeping them in repair?"

ADMIRAL FLETCHER: "No, I know nothing of that kind."

MR. ROBERTS: "Then, if there is such a lack of care with submarines as set forth in this article, there is no one in the Navy Department who is responsible for it?"

ADMIRAL FLETCHER: "Yes."

When Commander Sterling made the report on the unsatisfactory condition of the submarines, if Secretary Daniels had not abolished the aid for inspection he could have sent for the aid, turned the report over to him for investigation, the findings to be made direct to the Secretary. The next move would have been to call together the chiefs of bureau concerned and thresh the matter out before the aids, in conjunction with the bureau chiefs, either in the presence of the Secretary or brought to him for final decision after conclusion had been reached. This was not done, the aid for inspection having been

abolished, but Commander Sterling was reprimanded by the Secretary.

The organization of aids to the Secretary, consisting of an aid for operations, for personnel, for material, and for inspection, making a council of four responsible expert advisers, was turned over to the present head of the navy. This has been disrupted and no established system has taken its place. In case of a crisis, business would be congested, confusion would reign, discredit to the navy would follow, with possible disgrace to the country.

Building battle-ships without an adequate force of men is equal to wasting money; only ten ships of the first line and eleven of the second, according to the Navy Department, can be placed in full commission for service, due to a shortage of men and officers.

To provide a proper complement for all vessels of the navy which could still be made useful would require an additional force of 18,556 men and 933 line officers, according to the testimony of Admiral Badger before the Naval Committee, December 8, 1914.

That we have not been getting proper return for money expended in the navy is not known to the majority of our people, nor is it realized to what extent political influences have misdirected the appropriations during the past twenty-five years. The remedy will only come from absolute publicity.

Let a special committee be appointed to investigate the conditions in the navy.

Let a special committee of military experts from the army and navy be appointed to recommend what naval stations shall be abolished and sold and if any shall be established to take their places.

Let Congress inaugurate a national council of defense made up of members of the Cabinet, Senate, and House, with the chiefs of staff from the army and navy, that more efficient co-operation may be obtained between the executive and legislative branches of the Government in respect to military requirements.

Let Congress establish a general staff in the navy.

Let appropriations be made in budget form on a plan of expenditures proposed by the department.

Let action be taken by this Congress in order that necessary reforms and changes may be made at once, as it is now recognized that the navy should be the strong right arm of the Government and one of the vital factors in the national strength.

GEORGE V. L. MEYER.